indicators of rare habitat types – we took a focal-habitat approach instead. We were specifically interested in habitats that we believe are in particular jeopardy due to conversion and fragmentation, for example, habitats represented by Pine Savanna and Peatland Atlantic White Cedar Forest natural communities.

In conducting this analysis, we relied on site records for groups of species we termed indicator guilds. We chose to include species in these guilds that were tightly associated with particular habitats at risk. Guild membership was not restricted to rare species, although most of the rare species in the study area were included due to their general vulnerability to habitat loss.

All species were considered for membership in these guilds, although in practice, we were limited to species which had been included in previous inventory efforts. Guild members were all animals, due to their greater sensitivity than plants to loss of large tracts and connections across the landscape. In addition to the vertebrates typically used in landscape analyses, we included lepidoptera. Not only did we have a large quantity of site records for these species, but their high habitat specificity made them ideal subjects for this type of analysis.

We conducted this analysis guild by guild, making no assumptions that what constitutes an intact landscape for one group is suitable for another. This represents our attempt to take a more ecosystem-oriented approach to conservation assessment, although we acknowledge that our approach still makes use of indicators as surrogates for ecosystems.

Progress Toward a Regional Conservation Plan

The results of our analysis make two contributions toward the development of a comprehensive conservation plan for the study region: a protection assessment and an inventory assessment. We do not view our results as the plan itself, since further work must be done to specify particular protection and inventory strategies, which must involve the input from other agencies, conservation groups, governmental bodies, and individual citizens.

The protection assessment included in this document states only what components of the region's biodiversity have already been included in some form of conservation protection, and what components still need to be considered for protection. This analysis is multi-level. We assess the level of protection for individual elements, sites, core areas for the indicator guilds, large landscape units that incorporate habitat for multiple guilds, and connectors that link all of these components together. By incorporating all of these levels in our analysis, a blueprint for conservation design is implicit, although we do not make any formal recommendations in this regard.

The inventory assessment likewise states what components of biodiversity and which areas within the project have been sufficiently well surveyed to contribute to the protection assessment and which have not. We regard this assessment as crucial for any conservation planning,